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## **“Shot Round the World but not Heard”**

**Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston**

*Ben Marsh, University of Stirling, December 2007*

“No one could possibly claim,” explained Rev. Arthur Wentworth Eaton in his 1901 preface, that Elizabeth Johnston and her *Recollections* “are of very wide historical or even biographical interest.” She did not fire any cannons or act heroically, did not enter into personal correspondence with great figures, did not influence the course of political events, or in any other ways stake a claim to historical significance. Indeed, Eaton felt the need to justify her significance through her progeny, reeling off a long chain of her descendants who had subsequently held weighty positions in Canada – chief justices and Supreme Court judges, reverends, senators, and physicians “of the highest professional and social standing.”<sup>1</sup> Now, more than a century after Eaton’s pronouncement, scholars have successfully challenged the kinds of assumptions and biases in his definition of what constitutes “interesting” history. Reaching out beyond the high-profile powerful men has brought immense rewards in better understanding the everyday workings of societies in the past: their organisation, their interior values, their evolution – in short, their history. The rich rewards to be gained from this widening of historical and biographic “interest” are often hard-earned and contested, mined, as they must be, from limited deposits in the historical record. Historians of women, gender, families, and households in the colonial south first struck on quantitative sources to explore social relationships, and have since been meticulously panning and filtering qualitative sources – diaries, letters, and wills, among others – in search of answers to a host of questions about the nature of early southern family life, women’s roles in society, and the significance of gender and sexuality to individual and communal identities.<sup>2</sup> Placed in

the context of this new scholarship, Elizabeth Johnston's *Recollections* can tell us much about the shifting social boundaries of life in colonial and revolutionary Georgia.

Johnston was seventy-two years old in 1836 when, principally for her grandchildren, she wrote her memoirs, which comprised of a loose narrative interspersed with retrospective observations and memorable vignettes. To these eleven chapters, three of which were devoted to her youth in Georgia, she appended a set of precious family letters dated between 1769 and 1784. She chose the title *Recollections of a Georgia Loyalist*, a notable statement of identity in light of her residency in Nova Scotia from 1806 until her death in Halifax in 1848.<sup>3</sup> This indicated that Johnston carried with her for the rest of her life, like thousands of her contemporaries, the physical and psychological traumas of the American Revolution. Of all the groups touched by the Revolution, migrant loyalist women (whether white or black) arguably experienced the most radical transformation in their life prospects. On top of the widespread dislocation wrought by war, loyalists were more likely than others to experience periods of fugitivity or forced migration, to endure close association with a transient military (complete with physical, sexual, and epidemiological dangers), to come under legal pressures about their status and rights, and to suffer separation from family and institutional support mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> Had the Revolution never happened, Elizabeth Johnston might have reasonably expected, given her background, to go on to become a plantation mistress, socialite, and slave-owner in Georgia. But things were different in Nova Scotia, with many more free blacks than slaves, courtesy of the manumission and relocation policies adopted by self-interested British authorities during the War for Independence. When Johnston alighted at Annapolis Royal in the 1800s, the baggage carters working at the dock included one such freed black, a Rose Fortune, who reportedly held a monopoly in the local trucking business, charged modest prices, and wore "a white cap with the strings tied under her chin,

surmounted by a man's hat...a man's coat, a short skirt and high legged boots.”<sup>5</sup> For better or worse some 30,000 loyalists, including the Fortunes and the Johnstons, would ultimately have to start lives afresh as “pioneers” in Nova Scotia, a long way from the homes and the futures that might have been theirs.

Elizabeth Johnston, nee Lichtenstein (or anglicised as Lightenstone), was born ten miles or so from Savannah, on the Little Ogeechee River, on 28 May 1764. Her parentage reflected the diverse origins of Georgia's fledgling population, for since the colony's founding and in spite of its problematic infancy during the trusteeship (1732-52), immigrants had been arriving from across the Atlantic world. In the year of her birth, the population was only around 15,000, but it would double in size by the time she reached her teens, as newcomers poured in – most of them now from other British American colonies – seeking cheap, profitable and fertile lands either for plantation agriculture along the lowcountry or for subsistence farming further west.<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth's father, Johann Lichtenstein (hereinafter John Lightenstone), was himself born half a world away in the Russian seaport town of Kronstadt, where his father, a Protestant minister, ran an academy.<sup>7</sup> This seafaring background served Lightenstone well, enabling him to gain employment as a scout-boat pilot for the royal government that took over the administration of Georgia in 1752.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth's mother was Catherine Delegal, a woman of French Huguenot stock whose father, Philip Delegal, had left South Carolina in 1736 as an ensign in a company under the command of James Oglethorpe that established a fort at the southern tip of St. Simons Island.<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth's bloodline was thus an odd commingling of peoples set in motion by upheavals in Europe, but converging upon the rich prospects of British America's southern frontier.

The common connection between these peoples was their strong, shared commitment to devout Protestantism, an influence that subsequently dominated Elizabeth's worldview throughout her life, and that she herself characterised as her "knowledge of the truth of His Holy Word."<sup>10</sup> When aged just seven, Elizabeth received a letter from her grandparents in Peterhof recommending to her "thy blessed Saviour" for a "pretty companion and a true friend," and urging her to trace his footsteps. Two years earlier, in 1769, the pair had written a warm letter to her mother, imploring her that "Betsey...be bred up in the fear and love of God." The grandparents had obviously been hugely moved by the short letters they had received from their unknown new family in Georgia, and, delighted at the "Christian-like sentiments" of Catherine Delegal, responded expressively in the language of affection and tenderness. Elizabeth's maternal grandparents were more visible presences in her life in Georgia, and equally supportive of her early quest for spiritual literacy: she recalled that Philip Delegal in particular was "extremely fond of reading."<sup>11</sup>

The fact that Elizabeth's relatives were literate, enlightened transatlantic correspondents reflected their professional backgrounds and respectable social status – she was born into a genteel world that celebrated bonds of kinship, learning, and the Protestant faith. Few of the early white settlers who had been sent over "on the charity," and none of the enslaved Africans whose presence had been authorised since 1751 enjoyed such advantages upon their arrival to the province. Moreover, John Lightenstone was able to ascend the socio-economic pyramid of late colonial Georgia with relative speed, thanks to the patronage and influence of both his father-in-law Philip Delegal and Georgia governor James Wright, whom Lightenstone ferried around the lowcountry in fulfilment of his government duties as commander of the scout boat. Lightenstone's responsibilities were quite varied. Besides transporting public officers, they apparently included protecting remote families from Indian

attack, and enforcing quarantine regulations by confining incoming slave ships suspected of infectious diseases (such as smallpox) to Tybee Island, about seventeen miles downriver of Savannah. His expanding responsibilities and frequent absences prompted the Lightenstones to move from Elizabeth's birthplace on the Little Ogeechee – where the Delegal family held considerable lands – to suburban Yamacraw when Elizabeth was an infant. John Lightenstone was awarded a land grant of two hundred acres on the Sapelo River (in the south of the province) in March of 1767, but Elizabeth saw little if any of these lands, for he shortly relocated his family to a plantation on Skidaway Island, “a very pleasant place upon the water.”<sup>12</sup>

Such migrations were common among settlers as they adapted to changing conditions in the colony, jostling for opportunities and acreage in an unfamiliar environment. Like many of their contemporaries of middling to high status, the Lightenstones also came to maintain a house in the growing market centre of Savannah, probably residing there according to season. But they spent most of their country residence on Skidaway, an island largely owned by Philip Delegal. Elizabeth had fond memories of being a young girl enjoying the idyllic delights of Skidaway in the 1760s, with its abundant figs, peaches, pomegranates, plums, mulberries, nectarines, and oranges. She also recalled that the finest varieties of fish and shellfish were “easily procured in plenty,” and that, as an only child, she occupied her leisure hours among the trees, the rivers, and the animals.

From an early age, Elizabeth was also surrounded by slaves. Her father apparently owned three bondspeople outright according to his land grant application of 1766, but, thanks to his marital connections, was soon more heavily involved in slave ownership and plantation management. The fertile lands on Skidaway were used partly to raise provisions “for his

family and people,” chiefly Indian corn and sweet potatoes. Land was also devoted to the production of the dye indigo – one of the key products of the slave economy of the mid eighteenth century lowcountry.<sup>13</sup> An advertisement posted by John Lightenstone in the *Georgia Gazette* during the spring of 1767 provided evidence of the continuing connections between the Lightenstones’ slaveholding and the Delegal family in Elizabeth’s formative years:

*Taken or lost, for the Subscriber, about the 14th February last, off or near the plantation of Philip Delegal, Esq. A NEW NEGROE WENCH*

*Stout and tall, about 30 years old, speaks no English, has her country marks upon her body, had on when she went away white negroe cloth cloaths. Whoever takes her up, or can give any intelligence of her to the subscriber, so that he may have her, shall have 20s. reward. – There is a great reason to think the Indians have carried her off.*

The period of Elizabeth’s childhood was a significant turning point in Georgia’s involvement in the Atlantic slave trade, as Savannah merchants graduated from purchasing a minority of their slaves directly from West Africa (c.1755-67) to purchasing an overwhelming majority (c.1768-71). But immersion in the complex world of exploitative race relations appears to have made little impression on Elizabeth – or at least, little impression that she wanted to share. Only rarely, and casually, did she engage with the subject of slavery in her *Recollections*. These passing references largely overlooked the traumas and depredations of the institution, and incidents such as the above escape (or kidnapping) reported by her father. Instead, when Johnston dealt with bondspeople, she characterised them as “servants” and described them as “greatly attached to the family.”<sup>14</sup>

But while Johnston retrospectively sanitised her *Recollections*, allowing slavery to fade into the black-ground, at the time she must have been acutely conscious of the significance of bondspeople to her life in Georgia, Jamaica, and beyond. In her correspondence she openly discussed her father-in-law's sale of his "negroes" in 1784, commenting that he had received many inquiries from Charleston in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, as opportunistic developers sought to do business with emigrants.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary letters also made clear that her onerous childcare responsibilities were shared with an enslaved nurse named Hagar, something that Elizabeth left hazy in the *Recollections* themselves.<sup>16</sup> In spite of these conscious efforts to marginalise the influence of bondspeople on her history (and vice versa), Elizabeth Johnston inadvertently offered up evidence that the institution of slavery gnawed at the subconscious worlds of elite white women: when her daughter Catharine was given eighty drops of laudanum to quieten an illness, Elizabeth described the violent delirium that was induced as "a dreadful state, thinking that there was an insurrection of the slaves, that they had set fire to the house, and that the bed she lay on was in flames." She also drew attention, indirectly, to the more leisurely and luxurious lifestyle that Georgia plantation mistresses could afford, by having slaves perform everyday chores. Beyond the slave societies of the lowcountry and the Caribbean, Elizabeth and her daughters had to develop new skills and new strategies, for "it was thought a great indulgence if the mistress had no more labor than to have the fag [supervision] of all the children" on the grand event of the fortnightly wash day; gone were the "habits and comforts of a lady."<sup>17</sup>

That Elizabeth Johnston developed and sustained these views about Africans and African-American slaves is testament to the speed and the power with which social models were implanted into the cultural fabric of late colonial Georgia. With the arrival of bondspeople in



large numbers from the 1750s, and the legal and economic framework of plantation slavery, came a whole host of societal controls that instilled new behavioural expectations upon the lowcountry population – black or white, wealthy or poor. Elizabeth Johnston was among the first generation of Georgians born into such a system, but its formula was well-tested, and had already proved tragically effective, in older colonies – and especially in South Carolina, where many of Georgia’s new settlers originated, including Elizabeth’s maternal family. Plantation societies were able to be remarkably resilient, in spite of their structural weaknesses, because they relied heavily upon the conditioning of ideas about race and gender. Indeed, until relatively recently, historians took few pains to separate the colonial from the antebellum eras in their considerations of American slavery because the institution, its regions, and its products seemed somehow timeless and amorphous.<sup>18</sup> So it is worth remembering that Elizabeth Johnston’s views on slavery were closer to most elite white Georgians’ views a century *after* her birth than they were a decade or so *before* it. What were their hallmarks? Put bluntly: that it was ladylike to own slaves but not to discuss them; that blacks were predominantly labour-saving devices; that they were ostensibly loyal but potentially insidious; that they were capable of limited independent agency. Significantly lacking in Johnston’s views, though arguably more apparent among southern slaveholders in the antebellum era, were (a) any emphasis on paternalism or “benevolent” slaveownership, (b) any consideration of the religiosity of slaves, and (c) any semblance of “gender affinity” with African-American females. For Johnston, a common biological sex could never straddle the differences embodied in colour, for gender was always racialised: “I was much exhausted in mind and body,” she complained about life as a young mother, “having no female...with me, only black servants.”<sup>19</sup>

Elizabeth Johnston's cold, emotionless depiction of those outside of her recognised social orbit contrasted dramatically with the warmth she expressed and devotion she showed to those inside it, particularly her family. In her childhood, she recalled that both of her parents read to her and stimulated her interests, though the literature that she apparently enjoyed, which included Gilbert West's 1747 *Observations on the history and evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, was some way removed from the more romantic mainstream titles being digested by her contemporaries. An only child, Elizabeth was extremely close to her mother, and when aged seven, "Betsey" protested to being separated to such an extent that she was allowed, at the very last minute, to depart with her on a trip to Philadelphia. Unbeknownst to Elizabeth this would be the first of dozens of ocean-going voyages over the course of her life, though in none other was her wardrobe quite so improvised, courtesy of kind "ladies offering to assist in cutting over some of my mother's clothes for me."<sup>20</sup> Catherine Delegal Lightenstone's summer voyage to cooler climes was intended to alleviate her poor health, but her malarial-style afflictions continued, and, "much regretted" in the *Georgia Gazette*, she died on Skidaway in August 1774 when Elizabeth was aged ten.<sup>21</sup> Motherhood was fragile, even for those of relatively high status, in a colony that had become internationally renowned for its orphans, and where black children were routinely separated from their parents.<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth felt her "beloved and tender" mother's loss keenly for it heralded a transformation in her upbringing. Gone were the idyllic days on Skidaway Island, as she was sent to live with a great-aunt at her plantation on the mainland, ominously named Mount Piety.

With hindsight, Elizabeth saw some divine purpose in her mother's death, implying that as a child she might have been overindulged and under-disciplined. But by contemporary standards her early education was robust, and the Lightenstone parenting was significantly a

team affair. On one occasion, Betsey remembered that she defied her mother by trying to beat their cat, because it had opportunistically eaten her bird. The misbehaviour spread: when Catherine threatened to “correct” Betsey, the little girl evaded her and took refuge up a large tree, refusing to come down. Any smugness quickly evaporated, however, when Betsey witnessed (from presumably an excellent vantage point) her father returning home, and she remembered that “I was soon out of the tree and seated in the parlor.”<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth’s upbringing coincided with a wider shift in Anglo-American parenting that some have characterised as a transition from “patriarchy” to “paternalism,” or from a rawer form of authoritarian power to a more reasoned, consensual style of authority.<sup>24</sup> Johnston’s writings about the family resounded with the themes of discipline *with* affection, of duty *with* love. As Elizabeth remarked of her fond father John: “I loved him, yet I always from a child had an awe of him.”<sup>25</sup> Such pairings of virtues complicated familial relationships, but also strengthened them. Strict generational deference helped underwrite the lowcountry elite’s claims to wider authority, and in Georgia the American Revolution would challenge both.<sup>26</sup>

Three influences shaped Elizabeth’s education as a young girl in the 1770s: her father, her great-aunt, and formal classes at the finest schools that Savannah offered. The extent and the quality of private schooling for young females in late colonial Savannah were variable.<sup>27</sup> Supply in the form of specialist tutors was initially rather eclectic and peripatetic, but the demand side of the equation was soon large enough to attract enterprising teachers to advertise their subjects, methods, and institutions to wealthy parents. Schoolmistress Elizabeth Bedon, for instance, listed her charges in 1769 at twenty shillings per quarter for day scholars or twenty-five pounds per annum for full boarders.<sup>28</sup> All children at such schools were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, but beyond those rudimentary skills the curriculum became more gendered. For the young girls of prosperous families, specialisation

could be pursued in needlework (practical and ornamental), dancing, music, and the languages (principally Latin, French, and less commonly Greek).<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth did not enjoy her sewing, to the frustration of her guardian, who cruelly declared her a “botcher at it.” But, perhaps unsurprisingly in light of her early start, she excelled in other branches of education and was “always ambitious to be at the head of my class at school.” This last comment, in conjunction with her observation that “[o]ur teachers became officers in the rebel army,” suggests she may have attended one of the larger schools in Savannah – probably the mixed academy of Alexander Findlay and James Seymour in Broughton Street which promised to “bring the rising generation in Georgia to great proficiency in the several branches of literature which they profess to teach” and was examined approvingly by the governor, councilmen, and several prominent scholarly gentlemen in 1770.<sup>30</sup>

Elizabeth Johnston’s placid life, divided between the rustic austerity of Mount Piety and her competitive Savannah schooldays, was radically transformed by the onset of the American Revolution. The significance of the event for her was largely social rather than political, and she displayed little interest in the competing ideologies or finer points of constitutional friction. This apparent disinterest reflected her age (just twelve at the signing of the Declaration of Independence) in conjunction with her gender. The intellectual Revolution was held to be a matter for grown-ups and for men, a belief that John Adams articulated in response to his wife Abigail’s provocative call to remember the ladies: “their Delicacy renders them unfit for...the arduous Cares of State.”<sup>31</sup> But a third factor explaining Elizabeth’s lightweight treatment of the political conflict was common to a large segment of colonial Americans in the early 1770s, especially outside of the northeastern seaboard – described by Benjamin Rush in 1777 as “a great number of persons who were neither Whigs nor Tories.”<sup>32</sup> Robert M. Calhoon has estimated that approximately half the colonists of

European ancestry tried to avoid involvement in the struggle, most of them “simple apolitical folk.”<sup>33</sup> Like many Georgians, Elizabeth’s future husband was cautioned by his father, in a letter from Savannah dated 20 August 1774, against “taking any part in the unhappy political disputes...be silent on the subject...while matters of such consequence are agitating.”<sup>34</sup> Leslie Hall has argued that Georgia settlers were only really consistent in their desire for property rights and civil authority, and that many chose to swear allegiance to any politicized group that asked them to do so if it secured their holdings – including lands and, notably, slaves.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth herself never really explained what motivated the “rebels” to take action in Georgia, falling back on rather vague, passive references to “the spirit of the times” afflicting otherwise “amiable” and “fine” young men such as John Milledge.<sup>36</sup> But through the refracting prism of her memoirs it is possible to discern elements of regionalism and elitism. She felt that people in Georgia were “inflamed” as outside conflicts “began to spread to the southward” after 1774. Moreover, although these “people” included her teachers and the likes of Milledge, she deliberately disparaged them as a “ragged corps,” as “the scum [that] rose to the top,” an interpretation that was shared even by other Patriots such as the merchant Joseph Clay, who reported in 1777 that Georgia “Government has got into the Hands of those whose ability or situation in Life does not intitle them to it.”<sup>37</sup> If there exists a faint suggestion in Johnston’s comments that Georgia’s revolution was fomented by the lower orders being swept up by New England radicalism, far more apparent is Elizabeth’s own bitterness at her family’s subsequent victimisation. Her American Revolution, like thousands of her contemporaries’, was not about noble ideas but about hard realities.

By 1776 the actions of local “committees” in Georgia, who monitored adherence to the Continental Association (a trade boycott against the British), were having some effect in polarising the white population – especially in the backcountry where they had famously

tortured and humiliated Thomas Brown.<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Johnston remembered that armed mobs gathered in Savannah to exact public oaths from everybody, “gentle and simple”, and that the consequences of declaring against the Association, or for the King, were grave. At one point she preferred to stand away from the window rather than watch a Tory British pilot suffering the indignity of being tarred and feathered and “carried all over the town.”<sup>39</sup> As elsewhere, Georgia’s revolutionary movement soon matured beyond traditional crowd protests and economic boycotts, and by the late spring the new faction meeting in Augusta had drafted a rudimentary frame of government, just in time to send delegates to the Philadelphia convention and the signing of the Declaration of Independence (having missed out on the Continental Congress’s first two years). By then, most of Georgia’s royal governing elites had been arrested or fled to the British warships that had arrived in the Savannah River in January. Elizabeth’s father, John Lightenstone, though surprised while half-shaved and half-dressed, apparently made a dramatic escape by evading a party of Patriot soldiers and sailing his skiff to Tybee Island and the safety of the man-of-war *The Scarborough*. Strangely, Lightenstone’s bondspeople did not choose to advertise *his* escape from Skidaway. Indeed, Elizabeth reported that one slave, a “sensible, plausible black man, who had been brought up as a pet in my grandfather’s house,” deliberately engaged the soldiers to delay their search, while Lightenstone grabbed his sails and oars.<sup>40</sup> Lightenstone testified to a British commission investigating loyalists’ claims that he had earlier refused an offer from the rebels to continue as commander of the Georgia scout boat (which they had sequestered), “if he would follow their measures.”<sup>41</sup> Lightenstone’s unrivalled knowledge of the Georgia seaboard and navigable rivers, his naval and military expertise, his loyalty to the governor who had given him his commission in 1768, and especially this spirited refusal were evidently enough to make him a candidate for arrest.

Georgia remained independent for more than two years, as the Patriots – in spite of the factionalism that pervaded their new republican government – desperately fended off incipient threats from Florida and the backcountry, and sought to maintain control over precarious relations with slaves and Indians. One recurring thorny problem was how to deal with the lands, slaves, and the families of loyalist émigrés, which could occasion harsh solutions.<sup>42</sup> In August 1778 the Patriot Council of Safety took the radical step of ordering the area along the Ogeechee River cleared of small settlements established by loyalist wives, because they were providing asylum for their husbands during raids from Florida, passing on intelligence, and giving them “great assistance and help in their plundering schemes.”<sup>43</sup> The Patriots employed several methods, including popular harassment, imprisonment, and oaths of neutrality, to control suspected loyalists and to pressurise them to leave Georgia. More common, and less radical, than the breaking up of settlements and the forcible banishment of suspected enemies, was the straightforward confiscation of loyalists’ lands and possessions. An act of attainder in March 1778 allowed the state to sell off the real and personal property of 117 loyalists attainted of high treason, including that of John Lightenstone. But at some point later in 1778 Philip Delegal, Elizabeth’s grandfather, stepped in to protect his family’s assets. Against Elizabeth’s wishes, for she was still smarting at the humiliating treatment of her father, he drew up a petition on her behalf and had her take it to the Board of Commissioners, whose task it was to assess the confiscated lands. Delegal played his cards effectively: Elizabeth’s was an all-female delegation (she was accompanied by an unidentified lady), and the petition emphasised the “orphan condition” that the fourteen-year-old was left in. Georgia authorities, unsure whether or not to impute loyalist sentiments to the wives, widows, and children of bona fide loyalist husbands, and treat them in like fashion, seem to have been rather inconsistent when presented with this paternalistic dilemma. It was one thing preventing troublesome adult wives from openly abetting Florida Rangers, but

when presented with charity cases such as Elizabeth Lightenstone, the commissioners sometimes responded benevolently. “Our property was not sold as was that of many other Loyalists” recalled Elizabeth, noting that “[o]ne or two case besides mine show that they did give the property to wives and children whose husbands and fathers had been forced away.”<sup>44</sup> As enumerated by John Lightenstone in 1784, this property consisted of 381 cultivated acres complete with buildings, indigo vats, crops (corn, peas, and potatoes), fifty-six head of livestock (cattle, sheep, and hogs), and four horses, along with 150 acres of uncultivated land in the northwest of the colony, in Wrightsborough, that had been granted him in 1774.<sup>45</sup> The reason that Lightenstone knew these specifics was that he became reacquainted with his lands when Georgia became the only rebellious state to be officially restored to royal allegiance. Indeed, between 23 and 28 December 1778, Lightenstone actually helped to guide the British army (an assortment of Scottish, Hessian, and loyalist regiments) up the Savannah River, landing them at an unguarded bluff from which they were able to recapture the city abruptly, and with virtually no casualties, before the New Year.<sup>46</sup>

Largely because of her political alignment, Elizabeth Johnston’s account of life in Georgia during the Revolutionary War has been little used by historians, but it offers an invaluable counterpoint to Whiggish historical narratives or popular accounts that tend to foreground the role of white, male, Patriots – bolstered by occasional deputy-males such as Nancy Hart. The numbers alone indicate that the story was more complicated, and more interesting, than conventionally assumed.<sup>47</sup> Georgia probably had a higher proportion of loyalists than any other colony. Almost half of the colony’s population was black at the start of the Revolution, and almost half of the whites were female. As we have already established, Johnston was by no means a spokesperson for all of the silent majority on the “wrong” side of political, racial, or gendered divides, but she did provide wide evidence of “the violence with which civil wars



are entered upon,” and the peculiar dangers and opportunities that were opened up to subaltern groups during the conflict. During the French and American siege of British-held Savannah in October of 1779, she remarked on the bravery of “colored children” who ran to snuff out enemy shells’ fuses by covering them with sand from the town streets, and who helped to redress the depletion of British ammunition by delivering the spent balls up, receiving “for them seven-pence apiece.” People of colour had probably also done much of the backbreaking work of digging out the trenches and throwing up the works that protected the British and loyalist defenders from substantial bombardment during the month-long siege. For Johnston, white female heroics did not manifest themselves in the occasional shooting of Tories, or even Patriots, but in adapting to new circumstances, coping with hardships, and above all protecting the family and its honour – something she described as “the heroism of the mother.”<sup>48</sup>

So what was life like for a loyalist Georgia girl during the messy period of British control in the lowcountry (1779-1782)? Elizabeth’s memoirs place a strong emphasis on the militarisation of society – of a martial transformation in the dynamic of everyday life. The story is a depressingly familiar one at the start of the twenty-first century: British and American troops trying desperately to build on a successful invasion, to pacify a semi-armed and highly mobile civilian population, and to politically unify a disinterested and internally riven society. Elizabeth noted that after the recapture of Savannah, the inhabitants were exposed “to the fury of the British soldiers,” who evidently struggled to differentiate friend from foe, and committed much outrage, despite the best efforts of commanders such as Archibald Campbell who had issued clear orders to counter plundering.<sup>49</sup> On the one hand, rebels and fearful neutral refugees streamed away with what goods and belongings they could carry. On the other, loyalists and neutrals who had tolerated the administrative breakdown

under the Patriot government were now infused with a new confidence, and hopeful that economic order could be restored. Elizabeth, now fifteen, travelled from her great-aunt's isolated plantation, passing nervously through Hessian officers' checkpoints, to a Savannah whose streets were still littered with feathers, papers, and belongings. There, she was emotionally reunited with her father, whom she had not seen since his flight.<sup>50</sup> Though Elizabeth returned to Mount Piety, over the course of subsequent months John Lightenstone permitted her to spend prolonged periods in Savannah with various guardians.

The coincidence of Elizabeth's adolescence with the British occupation and loyalist hegemony in the lowcountry heralded a notable change in her socialisation patterns. It is probable that the Revolutionary War, like most wars, generally decelerated courtship cycles and slowed marriage across the American colonies. A high proportion of young males were temporarily or permanently removed due to military service, additional adult female contributions within existing families and households became less dispensable, and key determinants of new marriages/households were destabilised – such as inheritance, economy security, and landholding. But the concentration of loyalists into towns, regions, and migration streams as a result of British campaigning, was a counter-current that acted to create tight circles of association, and often stimulated courtship and intermarriage. In a letter to her own new husband dated 15 March 1780, Elizabeth reported “[t]hat a spirit of matrimony has got among” loyalist families, and claimed that people were “following our example in the matrimonial way.”<sup>51</sup>

Elizabeth's sudden immersion in the complicated sexual politics of Savannah society was a rude awakening for the book-loving, pious, bucolic teenager who described herself as “a young unsophisticated girl, quite new to the world, its customs and usages.”<sup>52</sup> It might have

been ruder. She remembered feeling an “affection...for a short time that I can hardly define” towards a friend of her father’s, whom she described as “a very handsome man for his time of life,” and also feeling rather overwhelmed and bashful when dining with British officers, who had been invited by her guardian because “he thought they could not show too much attention to those who had rescued us from rebel power.”<sup>53</sup> The man who really swept Elizabeth off her feet, however, was William Johnston, a dashing twenty-five year old captain of the New York Volunteers (a loyalist regiment), whose father Dr. Lewis Johnston ranked among the most prominent Savannah residents, was president of the royal governor’s council, and newly appointed commissioner of the loyalist bureau of police.<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth’s sentimental recollection of their first meeting, when she turned William’s head despite being clad in a simple home-made dress, thereby epitomising the “romance of the olden times!” was no doubt exaggerated. But her description of their courtship reveals much about contemporary gendered expectations among the elite, and the limits of conformity to feminine and masculine models. John Lightenstone, suspicious that William Johnston had no intention of marriage and that his attentions were therefore inappropriate, ordered Elizabeth tearfully and reluctantly back to her great-aunt’s plantation.<sup>55</sup> Johnston contrived to speak to her on her last night in Savannah, without her father’s knowledge, and she later wept abundantly out of guilt at her filial transgression, even though she had neither said nor done anything. Shortly afterwards, the persistent Johnston sought to engineer an encounter in the country by prevailing upon a mutual friend, probably Eliza Houstoun, to invite Elizabeth to stay at the Houstouns’ for a couple of days. But Elizabeth’s great-aunt’s “stiff notions of female decorum” prevented the rendezvous, and she then had the unenviable task of trying to explain to the exasperated teenager that such a trip would “not be delicate”, as it would look as if Elizabeth was just going because Johnston was there – which, of course, she was. Though at the time Elizabeth was not persuaded, looking back as a mother (and grandmother) she

believed that her great-aunt “was right and had proper ideas of female reserve.”<sup>56</sup> The contest between romantic machinations and proscriptive authoritarian influence took new forms in the reconfigured social worlds of revolutionary Georgia, a development that influenced black conjugal and familial relationships as well as white ones.<sup>57</sup>

Aged fifteen, Elizabeth was engaged to William Johnston some time in the summer of 1779, and the pair were married on 21 November.<sup>58</sup> The period between the two events saw Elizabeth move socially from her previous orbit, defined by the Delegals and Lightenstones, to a closer association with the Johnston family – a family as large in number as they were in influence in late colonial Georgia. With no siblings of her own, Elizabeth was soon describing her numerous future in-laws as “brothers” and “sisters”, and became the protégée of the matriarch Laleah Johnston, for whom she had immense respect. The head of the family, Dr. Lewis Johnston, was a former navy surgeon educated in Edinburgh, who had moved to Georgia from St. Kitts in 1753 with a substantial number of slaves, and set up a merchant house (“Johnston & Wylly”), a medical practice, and a rice plantation named “Annandale” after the clan’s famous Scottish estate in Dumfriesshire.<sup>59</sup> Before the Revolution intervened, their eldest son William had also been training to become a physician, receiving glowing reports from his tutor Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia, much to the gratification of his parents.<sup>60</sup> The Johnston connection allied Elizabeth Lightenstone to a group of people who had profoundly influenced the development of late colonial Georgia and the Atlantic world more generally: Scottish merchants and planters.<sup>61</sup> Their connections would primarily go on to shape the boundaries of her post-revolutionary life.

Besides moving under the wing of the Johnstons, between her engagement and her marriage Elizabeth also endured the frightening experience of the French and American siege of

Savannah in October 1779. Most civilians were removed from the town before the shelling began, to Hutchinson's Island, where they crowded into barns with whatever bedding, livestock and furniture they had managed to transport across the river. Elizabeth remembered that some fifty-eight loyalist women and children occupied her barn, "all intimate friends," and that every other house and structure was similarly divided into portions and "full of females."<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth's guardian Laleah Johnston remained in the town even after her daughters and elderly husband had crossed to the safety of the island, for she had two adult sons in the Tory lines, and two younger boys pleading to be involved, whom she refused to leave. Elizabeth chose to remain with her, not wanting to pass up on the opportunity of being close to William, with the end result that both women were late to embark, and had to leave after the heavy cannonade had started. Though frightened at the shot that was "whistling about our ears" and ducking her head, Elizabeth carried with her en route to the wharf the lasting memory of her "heroic mother-in-law" relenting suddenly and releasing her ten and fifteen year old boys to fight alongside their brothers.<sup>63</sup> From Hutchinson Island, Elizabeth and her fellow refugees could only watch as the Patriots attempted to storm the works at sunrise on 9 October, and she remembered that "every heart in our barn was aching, every eye in tears" at the prospect of defeat with no quarter given. But thanks to what she perceived as the intervention of a "merciful" and "Gracious God" the attack was repulsed, and despite the devastation of Savannah's streets and houses, royal authority and loyalist domination would continue for a time in the lowcountry. Upon hearing of the outcome at around ten o'clock, Elizabeth reported that the relieved women themselves "made war on the poultry and animals," sending a hearty dinner across to their fatigued relatives, including her father and fiancé.<sup>64</sup>

If the siege of Savannah was the first time that Elizabeth Johnston came face to face with the trauma of civil war, and feared for the life of her paramour, it was certainly not the last.

William Johnston and his regiment had been involved in the British victories at Long Island (August 1776), the White Plains (October 1776), and the storming of Fort Montgomery on the Hudson (October 1777), and besides their action at Savannah, would continue to be heavily involved in the bitter fighting in the southern colonies during 1780-1782. The 130-mile corridor between Savannah and Augusta was particularly hazardous, and William suffered fatigue and a nervous condition following his high-speed ride to bring intelligence to the British garrison in the northwest in early 1780. Reading between the lines that Elizabeth penned to venerate her husband's wartime performance, we can learn something more about her own experiences and responsibilities. When she was informed at very short notice that she could accompany him to New York in June of 1780 rather than remain, "very disconsolate in my own room, in tears" in Savannah, she leapt into action, which involved packing in half an hour, and getting her husband's linen ready and her own (which was lying wet). Escorted by the convoy of Sir Henry Clinton which was returning north after the successful reduction of Charleston, the voyage took only eight days, was accompanied by fine weather and music, "and the whole trip was very delightful." Elizabeth was soon expecting her first child.<sup>65</sup>

Before baby Andrew was born, back in Savannah, on 22 March 1781, Elizabeth's wartime experiences had deteriorated. She witnessed first hand the anti-British disaffection of abandoned Chesapeake loyalists, suffered a rough, tedious, and mosquito-plagued passage confined in a transport ship, discovered that her widowed sister-in-law's vessel had been captured by a privateer, and found that her brother-in-law – after whom her first child would be named – had been shot in the back near Augusta. Elizabeth was pleased when her husband

and father were both appointed to command local troops of dragoons raised by Georgia's royal governor James Wright, but soon realised that the bonus of having them nearby was not worth the associated risk. On every third night, and when any alarm was raised, Elizabeth watched her husband ride out into the menacing darkness, the city gates locked behind him. Such circumstances reaffirmed her dependence on prayer, though she remembered that frequently "the thought of the danger he had been in overpowered my mind."<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the most traumatic incident was not recorded in her memoirs, but reported by her grandson William Almon. Almon teased out of his reluctant grandmother that William Johnston's youngest brother, Jack, had been taken prisoner and hanged during the vicious skirmishing in Georgia towards the end of the war. Though Elizabeth reminded her grandchild that "we should love our enemies," such Christian thoughts were a long way from their minds during the conflict. William Johnston avenged his brother's death, gathering a posse of about twenty men, for whom Elizabeth provided supper at eleven o'clock, recalling that she told "the negroes to have food also for their horses" and that while some of the men were "gentlemen I knew," others were "bad-looking men, not gentlemen." Some twenty-eight hours later, the sleepless Elizabeth embraced her returned husband. When she asked him where he had been, William apparently replied "Bet, never ask me where I have been or what I have done, but we don't owe the rebels anything for Jack."<sup>67</sup> Elite mothers and wives like Elizabeth Johnston may have been partly insulated from the depredations of war in Georgia, but they still experienced profound dislocation, uncertainty, and trauma that influenced their relationships with partners, family, and outsiders.<sup>68</sup>

Naturally, it is difficult to gauge how far Elizabeth's *Recollections* were accurate or exaggerated, and to what extent the many moments of high drama, heroism and mystique were embellished for effect. But an important supplementary source is the extant

correspondence between Elizabeth and William Johnston, comprising of some thirty letters between 1780 and 1784. These letters corroborate the deep frustrations born of war and separation, and chart a sad drift from the excitement and exhilaration of newly weds to a harder, earthier, though still affectionate relationship. Besides their insight into the Johnstons' relationship, the letters remind us of the daily preoccupations of denizens of the late eighteenth-century Atlantic world. The problems of shipping and irregular correspondence, the little luxuries like sweetmeats and buckles, butter and melons, the sharp increase in the price of horses, the difficulty of getting miniature portraits made, and the cheer to be found in greyhounds.<sup>69</sup>

Elizabeth's pain at William's departures was almost a physical one, and in early letters she frequently described lonely evenings, wandering around empty rooms with a "heart weighed down with grief," and pledging that she would rather inhabit "the meanest hovel in the world" than be apart from him.<sup>70</sup> She apologised for her rapturous expressions, acknowledging them to be unfeminine and overtly passionate, and "not so becoming in my sex," and retreated to idealised, submissive assertions: "I have no wish but to please you in everything."<sup>71</sup> For his part, William responded with poems and assurances, finding "exquisite pleasure" in her letters and fretting when they were delayed or missing, wishing that it were more frequently possible to travel to Savannah without impropriety.<sup>72</sup> Though he continued to put his military career first, he wanted to know how she spent her time, and who was being friendly and attentive to her when she was seven months pregnant with their first child. Both were acutely conscious of gender in their interactions, and Elizabeth often dealt with this by being self-deprecating, acknowledging that her request for several Charleston purchases was something "your sex have no business with" and commenting, wryly, that "[y]ou'll probably think it encroaching beyond the privileges of a wife."<sup>73</sup>



Elizabeth's letters also revealed that the balance of power in their relationship was not as one-sided as it appeared superficially, something also owing to her transition from a fifteen-year-old bride to a more experienced mother. She saw it as her responsibility to monitor William's "impatient disposition", and kept her eyes peeled for civil opportunities that William might accept outside of the military, trying to persuade him to quit the army. On numerous occasions, Elizabeth's more devout Protestantism found expression, as she cautioned her husband about gambling, commenting "I should hope you will not act contrary to my wishes in a matter so easily to be complied with."<sup>74</sup> She called him to account not just with reference to her own happiness but also their children's livelihood, for William was highly expressive about his transition to fatherhood, and had requested a locket with both Elizabeth's and their newborn's hair in it in April 1781.<sup>75</sup> Nor was she above mocking him for his behaviour and his devotion to the political and military cause: in 1782 Elizabeth pointedly compared him to the ancient Romans, "who were so disinterested as to sacrifice wives & children and every other consideration for the welfare of their country."<sup>76</sup> The last letter Elizabeth sent from Savannah was on 3 November 1781, and in later years her tone was more assertive, warning that "should you refuse this request I never will forgive your cruelty," and stating that "I hope I need say no more on this subject in future."<sup>77</sup> Increasingly frustrated at their prolonged separation, as they waited for William's regiment to disband at the close of the war, Elizabeth signed off a letter from St. Augustine, Florida, in 1783 as "your once truly happy, tho' now afflicted wife."<sup>78</sup>

The loyalist diaspora carried Elizabeth Johnston oceans away from the life she had expected to lead in Georgia, and beyond the remits of this paper. Seven of her ten children survived beyond infancy, and their places of birth pay testament to her repeated upheavals: Savannah

(March 1781); Charleston, South Carolina (August 1782); St. Augustine, Florida (March 1784); Edinburgh, Scotland (May 1785); and Liguana and Kingston, Jamaica (six births between 1787-1794).<sup>79</sup> At the end of the war, William Johnston completed his medical training in Scotland, and went on to establish his family in Jamaica, thanks in large part to social networks cemented during the Revolutionary War. In contrast to Georgia, Elizabeth found Jamaica to be distasteful, for “[m]orals there were at the lowest ebb,” and she referred to blacks practicing degenerate “habits of life” and even well-to-do whites indulging themselves in various ways, including dinner parties and card games on the Sabbath. In an effort to protect the rectitude of her own family from such “dreadful examples”, Elizabeth home-taught her own children, reading each morning, conducting family prayers, and instructing her girls in sewing, only consenting to their attending school after they had been in Jamaica for ten years, when she was aged 32. For his part, William agreed not to have company on Sunday, and never interfered with Elizabeth’s discipline or mode of child-raising, as she noted “he highly respect my religious principles.”<sup>80</sup> For reasons of health as well as disenchantment with the moral dynamics of life in the Caribbean, the family eventually relocated to the less infectious and less dissolute province of Nova Scotia, a long-established loyalist haven. There, Elizabeth settled to life as the matriarch of a growing dynasty, and caught up with old friends including classmates from her school years in Savannah.<sup>81</sup>

Over the course of her life, Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston upheld a set of core values that reflected her background and upbringing in Georgia: the ethnocentricity of the dominant race, the conservatism of the planter class, the conviction of the Protestant faith, and the public deference of the subordinated sex. Race, class, religion and gender manifested themselves most overtly in Elizabeth Johnston’s devotion to education, to (white) family, to healthcare

and to parenthood. In some respects, her response to the traumas around her – to the effects of slavery, revolution, war, migration, and disease – was to turn inward and focus on those issues over which she could exert some control: her intellect, her children, her relationships, her household. This introspective and spiritual impulse she shared with several elite contemporaries, such as Martha Laurens Ramsay, who showed remarkable similarities in her responses to war and upheaval, despite her prominent Patriot alignment and connections.<sup>82</sup> Even Johnston's loyalism was more social than political, more human than ideological, for much of her fierce partisanry was born out of perceived injustice at the treatment of her family by others, and she showed plenty of disaffection with the British war effort when it fell short. Elizabeth Johnston was catapulted around the British Atlantic world as a result of the American Revolution coming to Georgia, and her memoirs of her life before, during, and afterwards remind us that the Revolution was more complex than it is sometimes portrayed. Her social conditioning, her experiences and viewpoints, though beneath the radar of grand historical narratives, help explain how larger, more visible structures have endured. Elizabeth Johnston fought in a long series of internal conflicts – including battles over parental authority, the use of slaves, education, the nature of marriage, the gendering of heroism and political alignment, and the meaning of divine providence. In the context of her patriarchal era the odds were firmly stacked, and the outcome of most of these conflicts saw her reach conclusions that reinforced the social order. She marginalised the significance of slavery and upheld inequities between the sexes, perpetuating conformity to an idealised model of female deference – albeit with a deft amount of practical self-assertion from time to time. But among the trivia and loaded value judgements of her recollections, there *is* much to interest those exploring the gendered “pursuit of happiness” in the revolutionary era. Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston had made a dramatic journey from the rebellious little girl up a tree on Skidaway

Island to the Georgia wife and, ultimately, the Nova Scotian widow who proclaimed that, “like all human enjoyments, mine was not full and satisfactory.”<sup>83</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Lichtenstein Johnston, *Recollections of a Georgia loyalist*, edited by A.W. Eaton, (New York and London: M. F. Mansfield & company, 1901, reprinted Spartanburg, S.C.: Reprint Co., 1972), pp.9-10.

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent recent survey essay on the historiography of colonial southern women, see Cynthia A. Kierner, “Women, Gender, Families, and Households in the Southern Colonies,” *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 73 (August 2007), pp.643-658.

<sup>3</sup> *Church Times* (Halifax, Nova Scotia), 29 Sept. 1848.

<sup>4</sup> For the classic treatment of loyalists, see Mary Beth Norton, *The British Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown, & Co., 1972).

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Wheelock Harris quoted in Charlotte I. Perkins, *The Romance of Old Annapolis Royal* (Halifax: Historical Association of Annapolis Royal, 1934), pp.92-93.

<sup>6</sup> Figure derived from Governor Wright’s population estimates in 1762 and 1766. A.D. Candler, et al, eds., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 39 vols. (Atlanta and Athens: various printers, 1904–16, 1976–89), vol. 28, pt.1, p.309; vol. 28, pt.2, p.185. (Hereinafter cited as *Col.Recs.*)

<sup>7</sup> Kronstadt was the seat of the Russian Baltic fleet, and guards the approaches to St. Petersburg. Johnston records the names of her paternal grandparents as Gustavus Philip Lichtenstein (of German descent but born in England) and Beatrice Elizabeth Lloyd (English or Irish). Johnston, *Recollections*, p.37.

<sup>8</sup> From various sources it is likely that Johann Lichtenstein settled in Georgia between 1755 and 1757. According to his testimony to a royal commission (see below) he went to America in 1755 while his daughter recalled that he knew John Milledge (born in 1757) from infancy.

<sup>9</sup> Egmont Papers, University of Georgia Library, 14201, p.208; *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, 22 vols. (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1840-1996), vol. 1, “A

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Voyage to Georgia begun in the Year 1735 by Francis Moore,” pp.90, 104, 132; Margaret Davis Cate, *Our Todays and Yesterdays: A Story of Brunswick and the Coastal Islands* (Glover Bros., Inc., Brunswick, Georgia, 1930), pp.58, 118.

<sup>10</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.39.

<sup>11</sup> Peterhof was Tzar Peter the Great’s magnificent imperial estate and cultural project overlooking the Gulf of Finland. Quotes and letters listed in Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.38, 39, 40.

<sup>12</sup> Ben Marsh, *Georgia’s Frontier Women: female fortunes in a Southern colony* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), p.225n117; Johnston, *Recollections*, p.41.

<sup>13</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.45, 73, 76, 85. The term “servant” was commonly used in the eighteenth century to classify black slaves.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.215, 218, 221. Lewis Johnston ultimately “disposed of your negroes” for £450 according to a letter from St. Augustine, Florida, dated 12 February 1784. *Ibid.*, p.222.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to her husband, St. Augustine, Florida, 12 February 1784, in Johnston, *Recollections*, p.222.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.108-109, 123.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion in Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), pp.28-29.

<sup>19</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.85. For a wider discussion of the limited extent to which the lowcountry female population shared and expressed a common gender identity, see Betty Wood, *Gender, Race, and Rank in a Revolutionary Age: The Georgia Lowcountry, 1750-1820* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.41-2, 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Georgia Gazette*, 24 August 1774.

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<sup>22</sup> For an account of the internationally-sponsored orphanage project spearheaded by George Whitefield in Georgia, see Edward J. Cashin, *Beloved Bethesda: a history of George Whitefield's home for boys, 1740-2000* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2001). See also Marsh, *Georgia's Frontier Women*, pp.87-89, 91 (orphans); 122-23, 167-174 (slave families).

<sup>23</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.50.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Blake Smith, "The Family in Early American History and Culture," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 39 (1982), pp.3-28 especially 18-19. For a wider discussion of changes in legal and cultural understandings of childhood and authority, see Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: children, law, and the Anglo-American revolution in authority* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2005), esp. pp.4-8. The breakdown of older, patriarchal models of authority is addressed at length in Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 52 (1995), pp.104-144.

<sup>25</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.50. See also her tribute to him upon his death, aged seventy-nine years. *Ibid.*, p.127.

<sup>26</sup> Several historians have commented on the generational split among prominent families in Georgia, whereby the revolutionary leaders were "often the younger sons of the colony's leaders, [and] must have found it difficult to break with their fathers and friends." Kenneth Coleman, *Colonial Georgia: a history* (New York: Scribner, 1976), p.271. See also Frank Lambert, *James Habersham: loyalty, politics, and commerce in colonial Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), pp.160, 167-178.

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<sup>27</sup> For a wider discussion of education in colonial Georgia, see Harold E. Davis, *The Fledgling Province: social and cultural life in colonial Georgia, 1733-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), pp.233-250.

<sup>28</sup> *Georgia Gazette*, 2 August 1769.

<sup>29</sup> For examples of such schools in the period of Elizabeth Johnston's youth, see the *Georgia Gazette*, 30 August 1764 (Timothy Cronin), 26 September 1765 (Medley D'Arcy Dawes), 22 April 1767 (James Whitefield), 25 May 1768 (Peter Gandy), 28 September 1768 (James Cosgreve).

<sup>30</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.44-5, 51. *Georgia Gazette*, 20 April 1768, 18 April 1770.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from John Adams to James Sullivan, Philadelphia, 26 May 1776. *Adams Family Correspondence*, ed. L.H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), vol. 1, p.401.

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels Through Life" Together With His Commonplace Book from 1789-1813*, ed. George W. Corner (Princeton: American Philosophical Society, 1948), p.119.

<sup>33</sup> Robert M. Calhoun, "Loyalism and Neutrality," in *A companion to the American Revolution*, ed. Jack P. Greene & J.R. Pole (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p.235.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from Dr. Lewis Johnston to William Johnston, Savannah, 20 August 1774, in Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.27-8.

<sup>35</sup> Leslie Hall, *Land and Allegiance in Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), p.30.

<sup>36</sup> Eaton, pp.45-46.



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<sup>37</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.44-46. Letter from Joseph Clay to Brith and Pechin, Savannah, 2 July 1777 in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, vol.8, “Letters of Joseph Clay, Merchant of Savannah 1776-1793.”

<sup>38</sup> Edward J. Cashin, *The King's Ranger: Thomas Brown and the American Revolution on the Southern Frontier* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.44.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel P. Coke, *Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists*, edited by Hugh E. Egerton (New York, Arno Press, 1969), pp.66-67.

<sup>42</sup> For a comprehensive consideration of landholding and political alignment during the Revolution, see Hall, *Land and Allegiance*.

<sup>43</sup> A.D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia*, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1908), vol. 2, p.97. For a fuller discussion of this measure and similar Tory actions during the war, see Ben Marsh, “Women and the American Revolution in Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 88 (2004), pp.157-78.

<sup>44</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.47.

<sup>45</sup> Coke, *Royal Commission*, p.67. That John Lightenstone did not claim for his slaves suggests that he had either sold them or carried them with him when he abandoned Georgia in 1782. Elsewhere in the commission’s reports he vouched for a fellow loyalist resident on the Georgia coast, George Barry of Tybee Island, swearing that he “[s]aw part of his property in flames it was burnt by the Rebels on account of his principles & they carried him Prisoner at the same time to Savannah...Has heard that the Rebels shot one of his Negroes.” *Ibid.*, p.208.

<sup>46</sup> For a discussion of the taking of Savannah, see Hall, *Land and Allegiance*, pp.74-76 and Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.47-48.

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<sup>47</sup> For an excellent recent summary of the prejudicial historiography of loyalism and loyalist numbers, see Edward Larkin, “What is a Loyalist?” in *Common Place* (<http://www.common-place.org/>), vol. 8, no. 1 (October 2007). He writes, “[e]ven at the more conservative (probably too conservative) 20 percent figure favored by some historians, the idea that such a significant proportion of the population may have opposed the independence movement is a staggering fact—a fact that remains virtually unaccounted for in our reckoning of the Revolution.”

<sup>48</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.46 (quote on civil wars), 57-58 (quote on black children - Johnston gave most of the credit for the successful repulse to Colonel Moncrief’s “ardour, skill, and industry”), 14 (quote on heroism).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48. Archibald Campbell, *Journal of an Expedition Against the Rebels of Georgia in North America under the Orders of Archibald Campbell Esquire Lieutenant Colonel of His Majesty's Regiment 1778*, ed. Colin Campbell (Darien: Ashantilly Press, 1981), 22 December 1778, p.15.

<sup>50</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.49.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.49, 53.

<sup>54</sup> Coke, *Royal Commission*, pp.246-247. Lewis Johnston, as president of the Upper House of the restored royal assembly, signed the contentious Georgia Disqualifying Act of July 1780, effectively placing 151 prominent rebels who under house arrest. Only in April 1781 did James Wright persuade the assembly to attain a smaller number for high treason, though the act apparently never became law. Hall, *Land and Allegiance*, pp.101-102.

<sup>55</sup> John Lightenstone had some good reason to be wary of Johnston’s conduct, for he knew him well from their shared campaigning during the war. Moreover, William Johnston’s youth

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had been rather tempestuous: he was partial to gaming, guilty of “repeated acts of folly and indiscretion” (in his own father’s words), and had wounded a night watchman in an altercation in Philadelphia in 1773. Ibid., pp.25-6, 167-172.

<sup>56</sup> The intervention was also fortuitous as far as Johnston’s military record was concerned, for it ensured he was able to leave for Carolina with his regiment. Ibid., pp.55-56.

<sup>57</sup> For the most comprehensive discussion to date of the impact of the revolutionary war on black livelihoods in the south, and the triangular nature of the conflict, see Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>58</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.15.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., pp.10-12; Coke, *Royal Commission*, pp.246-247.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Dr. Lewis Johnston to William Johnston, Savannah, 17 July 1773, in Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.165-167. Such connections helped to prompt Benjamin Rush to mount a public campaign to restore property and political rights to most former loyalists, and thanks to this and other pressures, most states began repealing anti-Tory legislation by 1787.

<sup>61</sup> For an excellent recent consideration of the impact of Scots merchants on the development of colonial Georgia, see Paul M. Pressly, “Scottish Merchants and the Shaping of Colonial Georgia,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 91 (2007), pp.135-168.

<sup>62</sup> Johnston, *Recollections*, p.58.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16, 60.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp.61, 62, 17.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp.65-66.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp.66-69, 70, 72.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., pp.32-33.

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<sup>68</sup> For a concise, wider consideration of the impact of the revolutionary war on women, see Carol Berkin, *First Generations: women in colonial America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), pp.165-194; and on southern white women, see Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp.69-101.

<sup>69</sup> For an account of these kinds of everyday influences in the context of a woman's life in revolutionary America, see Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, Jr., *The way of duty: a woman and her family in revolutionary America* (New York: Norton, 1984).

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, Savannah, 3 March 1780. Johnston, *Recollections*, p.181.

<sup>71</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, Savannah, 10 March 1780. *Ibid.*, pp.183, 184 (March 15).

<sup>72</sup> Letter from William Johnston to Elizabeth Johnston, St. Augustine, Florida, 27 March 1780. *Ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, Savannah, 16 January 1781. *Ibid.*, p.196.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>75</sup> Letter from William Johnston to Elizabeth Johnston, Charlestown, S.C., 29 April 1781. *Ibid.*, p.202.

<sup>76</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, Charlestown, S.C., 15 August 1782. *Ibid.*, p.208.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, St. Augustine, Florida, 12 February 1784. *Ibid.*, p.223.

<sup>78</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Johnston to William Johnston, St. Augustine, Florida, 2 January 1784. *Ibid.*, p.215.

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<sup>79</sup> The birth dates, names, and potted biographies of her children are provided in Johnston, *Recollections*, pp.34-36. The closeness of the births strongly suggests that Elizabeth Johnston used a wet nurse, an occasional practice among elites in eighteenth-century British America, though not as common as popularly held. Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: the revolutionary experience of American women, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, reprint 1996), pp.90-93.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.

<sup>81</sup> A childhood friend, Mrs. Thomson, had settled in Halifax. *Ibid.*, pp.111-112.

<sup>82</sup> Joanna Bowen Gillespie, *The Life and Times of Martha Laurens Ramsay, 1759-1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.